

## PART VII

## Farm Marketing and Level of Living

Location for Marketing

Marketing of Wahkiakum County farm products is affected somewhat by its distance from major cities and a relatively small local consuming market. The Willapa Hills barrier to the north causes truck freighting to take a longer round-about route to Puget Sound cities. The Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area is the nearest major marketing area. By means of ferries and boats Columbia River ports such as Astoria, Oregon and Westport, Washington can be reached. Remoteness handicaps dairymen, poultrymen and vegetable growers in procuring feeds and supplies. It also reduces profit margins when marketing to outside processors in competition with Willamette Valley and Cowlitz Valley farmers who produce identical items grown in the Wahkiakum area. Major handicaps are the higher truck freight costs dairymen and vegetable growers pay to get their whole milk and cucumbers to Portland and Puget Sound markets.

Transportation

Discounting the longer distances and higher motor-hauling freight rates, transport facilities are good for shipping to Columbia River and Puget Sound points. The area has no common carrier railroad service and trucking is the dominant transportation used. A recently improved hard surfaced highway (State Highway 830) follows the banks of the Columbia to Longview and Kelso and connects with U.S. 90, a four-lane highway which provides rapid transport to Puget Sound or to Portland. By this route, milk tank, produce, and livestock hauling trucks can go from Cathlamet to Portland in about 2 to 3 hours. The time to Tacoma and Seattle is considerably more, exceeding five hours. Connections are good to the westward over Highway 830 to resort districts of Long Beach and Willapa Bay where there is a summer seasonal market for dairy and poultry products.

Other secondary truck routes used are ferries from Puget Island across the Columbia River to Westport, Oregon, and across the estuary of the Columbia River from Megler, Washington to Astoria, Oregon. While boat, ferry and barge service is available, modern farmers do not use the Columbia River as a means of getting products to markets as much as did their forefathers 25 to 50 years earlier. The main products sold today are whole milk and perishable vegetables which use the fastest and most convenient means to reach the receiving platforms of dairy and food processing plants in the more populated zone about Longview, Vancouver and Portland.

Income, Value of Products Sold

Although small in state totals, Wahkiakum County agriculture is commercially productive. Recent Census of Agriculture data on the value of farm products sold show that gross farm income has been rising in recent years. Wahkiakum farmers received \$1,469,550 in 1954, a 20 percent gain over the \$1,173,520 of 1949.

Farm gross income from sales of products was divided up among 254 farms in 1954. The biggest portion was received by 65 farms which grossed between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per year. There were only six large commercial farms who sold products valued at over \$25,000. Farms receiving \$10,000 to \$25,000 in income numbered 35. However, nearly one-fifth of Wahkiakum farms are of the low-income and non-commercial types which take in less than \$2,500 per year for crops, livestock and other products. A high value of dairy farm production in a few well-developed districts such as Paget Island, the Skamokawa and Grays River Valleys places Wahkiakum County thirty-second among the Washington counties in value of farm production, although in land area it ranks only thirty-seventh.

Total Value of Farm Products Sold in 1954: \$1,469,551

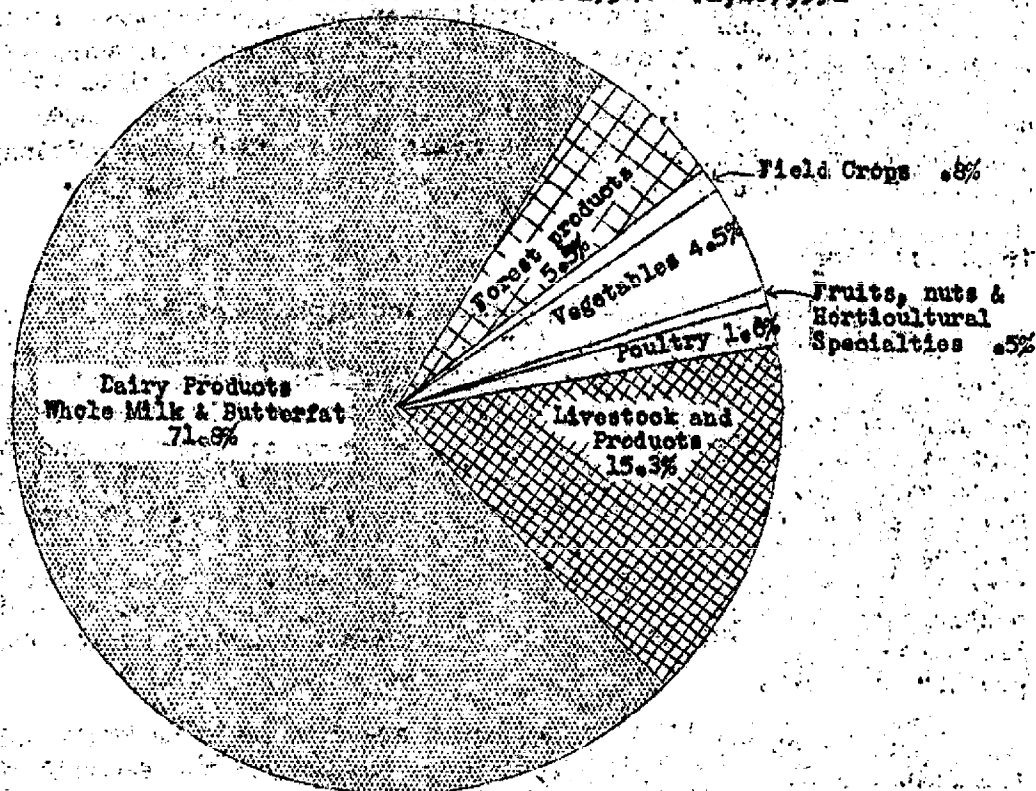


Figure 14.- Sources of Cash Income, Wahkiakum County Farms, 1954.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1954.

#### Marketing of Dairy Products

In 1954 Wahkiakum County dairymen marketed \$1,055,300 worth of whole milk and cream. Whole milk was the major farm product sold, bringing a gross return of \$1,038,650. Over 200 farms marketed whole milk and six dairy farms sold cream.

Having a relatively low potential of consumption within the local population of only 3,900, milk marketing is organized mainly to export a surplus supply to the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area where there is a well-concentrated population of over 750,000. The central city of the metropolitan

region is Portland, Oregon (population 373,480). Large supplies, however, are delivered to satellite cities on the lower Columbia River such as Kelso, Longview and Vancouver on the Washington side of the river and to distributors at the mouth of the Columbia River at Ilwaco, Washington and Astoria, Oregon.

Wahkiakum dairymen are located on the outer fringe of the greater-Portland milkshed. Some producers belong to the Lower Columbia River Dairymen's Association in Astoria, Oregon. Other Wahkiakum producers belong to the Cowlitz Dairymen's Association located at Longview. Much grade A milk is distributed by three state-licensed milk vendors in Longview and Kelso and two vendors at South Bend and Ilwaco in neighboring Pacific County. The Ilwaco vendor and the Lower Columbia Dairymen's Association at Astoria distribute to the resort area at the Columbia River mouth. Wahkiakum producers have over a dozen factory outlets within the greater Portland marketing area who handle surplus fluid milk as raw material for butter, cheese and ice cream.

#### Marketing Cattle, Sheep and Hogs

Dairymen and livestock farmers sell over \$225,000 worth of livestock each year. About 300 farms made sales of live animals during 1954. Dairy cattle culls and beef animals for slaughter comprise the major sales. Over 1,800 head of cattle brought in nearly \$200,000. Over 1,000 vealers were sold in

Table 19.- Livestock and Livestock Products Marketed  
Wahkiakum County, 1954.

Class of Livestock Products Sold	Quantity Marketed	Amount Received By Farmers
<u>Dairy Products</u>		
Whole milk-----	24,916,679 lbs.	\$1,038,649
Butterfat-----	30,185 lbs.	16,651
Total all dairy products		\$1,055,300
<u>Poultry and poultry products</u>		
Chickens-----	2,709 birds	\$ 2,971
Eggs-----	37,630 dozen	17,790
Turkeys, ducks, geese-----		2,492
Total all poultry & poultry products		\$ 23,253
<u>Animals sold alive</u>		
Cattle-----	1,888 head	199,507
Calves-----	1,032 head	22,555
Hogs and pigs-----	38 head	1,000
Sheep and lambs-----	114 head	1,805
Horses and mules-----	1 head	150
Total all animals sold alive		\$ 225,017
<u>Other livestock and livestock products sold</u>		\$ 470
Total amount received for livestock and livestock products-----		\$1,304,040

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

1954 bringing in over \$20,000. Sales of sheep, lambs and hogs were small grossing less than \$5,000.

Livestock marketing channels are well-developed in the lower Columbia River area. By use of trucks livestock are hauled to terminal stockyards in Portland. Beef producers of finished slaughter animals haul to Portland. Dairymen and small livestock farms are served by several country-buyers procuring animals for custom and small packing houses in Longview, Vancouver and Portland. Community livestock sales held weekly in Kelso, Woodland, Winlock and Chehalis, which are within two hours hauling time, are used to sell or trade slaughter, feeder and breeding stock.

#### Marketing Eggs and Poultry

Wahkiakum County's 60 poultry and egg producers sold over \$23,000 worth of products in 1954. Most of this moved to local-area markets along the Columbia River from Longview and Kelso westward to Long Beach. Fresh eggs are the main item sold through wholesalers and retailers. Some are sold directly off farms to tourists and neighbors. The Washington Cooperative Farmers Association receiving station at Longview is an important outlet. Poultrymen in western Wahkiakum County in the Grays River Valley also market to retailers in the resort and fishing settlements of Ilwaco, Long Beach and Ocean Park. Eggs are marketed in Astoria, Oregon by use of the Cross-Columbia ferry.

#### Marketing Crops

Vegetables, some mint oil and baled hay are the main marketable crops. Cucumbers sold in bulk for pickle and relish processing has been the most important cash crop in recent years. The cucumber crop sold to pickle processors in the greater Portland area and in Tacoma on Puget Sound was estimated in 1956 at 2,000 tons worth \$120,000. Another vegetable crop grown for fresh market in

Table 20.- Crops Marketed From Wahkiakum County Farms, 1954.

Type of Crop Sold	Amount Received By Farmers (Dollars)	Percent All Crops Sold
Vegetables (cucumbers, cabbage and other)	\$66,149	77.9
Field Crops (grass silage, mint for oil)	11,881	14.0
Fruits and Berries (apples, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, etc.)	4,732	5.6
Horticultural Specialties (shrubs, trees, bulbs, etc.)	2,100	2.5
Total amount received by farmers for cash crops	\$84,862	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

the greater Portland area is cabbage. Up to 200 tons and more have been sold in recent crop years, but recent cash returns of this crop have been less than \$5,000 annually.

Peppermint marketing has declined to a value of less than \$5,000 per year from a former scale of over \$50,000. Peppermint hay is distilled into crude oil and is thence marketed in cans to a firm which operates a peppermint refinery in Chehalis, Washington.

Baled hay is a local trading item and very little is trucked outside the county area. In recent years about 20 farms have had hay surpluses for sale to local dairy and livestock farmers. Over 600 tons worth over \$15,000 have been marketed in recent crop years in local trading.

#### Marketing Farm Forest Products

A large area of farm woodlands in Wahkiakum County is producing an increasing volume of marketable forest products. The most recent agricultural census revealed that 35 farms sold over \$80,000 worth of logs, pulpwood, fuelwood, Christmas trees and other forest products during 1954. This was nearly four times the volume of 1949. There is normally a good sawlog and pulpwood market in the lower Columbia River lumber and paper industry located at Longview and Cathlamet. Farmers are now selling Douglas fir, Western hemlock, Western red cedar, maple and alder sawlogs, pulp cordwood, piling, posts and shake timber from young stands of regrowth timber, which have grown up in the last 60 years. Minor forest products such as cascara bark, sword ferns and Christmas trees are also sold. There are numerous southwestern Washington markets for these woodland products. 1/ Wahkiakum County ranked twenty-third among Washington counties in farm forest products sales in 1954. The farm pulpwood harvest of 1954 ranked nineteenth and the farm woodland sawlog cut was seventeenth.

Table 21.- Forest Products on Farms, Wahkiakum County, 1954.

Type of Product	Farms Reporting	Quantity
Firewood and fuelwood cut-----	127	1,094 cords
Fence posts cut-----	26	4,352 posts
Sawlogs and veneer logs cut-----	27	4,346 M bd. ft.
Pulpwood cut-----	10	622 cords
Total value of firewood, fence posts, logs, lumber, pulpwood and other forest products sold-----	35	\$80,649

Sources: U.S. Census, Agriculture.  
Washington Crop and Livestock  
Reporting Service.

1/ George B. Stenzel, Marketing Woodlot Products in the State of Washington. State of Washington, Dept. of Conservation and Development, Institute of Forest Products, University of Washington, Seattle. Bulletin No. 15, 1954.

Agricultural Net Income Compared With Other Income Sources

Agricultural marketing by farmers to buyers produces a total net income which ranks second to forest products manufacturing in the overall Wahkiakum economy. A recent study by Guthrie and Boyle at the State College of Washington on incomes in the various Washington counties indicates that agriculture has been gaining in recent years. <sup>1/</sup> Total income in the county was about \$4,270,000 in 1952. Agriculture's share of this income was \$1,043,000, or nearly one-fourth.

Table 22.- Types and Sources of Income 1950-1952, Wahkiakum County <sup>1/</sup>

Type and Source of Income	Income in Dollars by Years			Percentage of County Income by Years		
	1950	1951	1952	1950	1951	1952
Agriculture	\$ 932,000	\$1,961,000	\$1,043,000	23.9	24.5	24.4
Construction	28,000	24,000	*	.7	.6	*
Government	283,000	288,000	355,000	7.2	7.3	8.3
Manufacturing	1,254,000	1,239,000	1,273,000	32.1	31.6	29.8
Service	155,000	203,000	302,000	4.0	5.2	7.1
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	209,000	255,000	259,000	5.4	6.5	6.1
Trade	287,000	282,000	308,000	7.3	7.2	7.2
Miscellaneous	44,000	57,000	73,000	1.1	1.3	1.7
Property Income	246,000	261,000	285,000	6.3	6.7	6.7
Other Income	467,000	358,000	372,000	12.0	9.1	8.7
Total	\$3,905,000	\$3,922,000	\$4,270,000	100.0	100.0	100.0

\* Less than one-half of 1% and included in Miscellaneous.

Specified Farm Expenditures and Costs

Wahkiakum farmers spend over \$590,000 per year for supplies, feed, gasoline and labor. Providing this local farm market with goods and services is an important part of business activity in Cathlamet, Skamokawa and Grays River. The largest item of expense to farmers and the main item sold to 337 farms is for feed for livestock and poultry. Feed purchases by farmers exceeded \$380,000 in 1954. Farmers also spent over \$107,000 in 1954 for labor used in dairying, hay and vegetable harvesting.

A significant trend affecting the prosperity of agriculture has been the rise in costs of farming. Farmers are paying more for supplies, equipment and labor in more recent years. In 1954 they were paying 27 percent more for these overhead items than they were in 1949.

<sup>1/</sup> John A. Guthrie and Stanley E. Boyle, County Income Payments in Washington, 1950-1952. Pullman, Wash. Washington State College, Bulletin No. 26.

Table 23.- Specified Farm Expenditures in 1954, Wahkiakum County

Type of Expenditure	Number of Farms Reporting	Expenditure of all Farms	Average Per Farm
Machine hire.....	176	\$ 34,985	\$ 198.78
Hired labor.....	167	107,205	641.95
Feed for livestock and poultry	337	380,700	1,129.67
Gasoline, petroleum fuel & oil	317	56,915	179.54
Commercial fertilizer.....	76	12,253	161.22
Lime and liming materials.....	5	50	10.00
Total production costs.....		\$592,108	

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.Level of Living on Wahkiakum County Farms

On the whole, farm people have not enjoyed as high a level of living as city people. Farm incomes are lower on the average than urban incomes. Because of isolated location of many farm homes, such conveniences as electricity, telephones and modern plumbing have not been as easily available to farm families. This is the general situation in American agriculture.

Table 24.- Indices of Level of Living of Wahkiakum County Farm Families, 1950 Compared with State and National Averages.

Index Items	Percentage of total farm families with listed index items		
	United States	Washington	Wahkiakum County
Farm Family Level-of-Living	122	154	138
Median Income per Family	\$1,567	\$2,380	\$2,915
Electricity	78.3%	92.5%	96.4%
Electric Hot Water Heater	17.4%	49.1%	55.8%
Electric Washing Machine	58.7%	85.4%	95.2%
Home Freezers	12.1%	14.5%	17.8%
Mech. Refrigerators	62.7%	77.4%	70.7%
Telephone	38.2%	57.5%	68.5%
Hot and Cold Water Plumbing	23.8%	70.4%	86.0%
Central Heating	18.1%	17.8%	2.3%
Houses with More than One Person per Room	22.3%	15.7%	9.4%
Automobiles	63.0%	77.6%	74.9%
Travel 10 Miles or More to Trading Center	21.4%	20.5%	8.9%

Source: Walter L. Slocum and Carol L. Stone, The Farm People of Washington at Mid-Century.

In Washington State and Wahkiakum County, however, the economic well-being and living standards of the farm population compares quite favorably with other rural population groups. Rural livelihood in Wahkiakum is slightly below the state farm average but is above the national farm average. Some isolated, low income farms in hilly sections tend to lower the average which

generally is good in the more fertile portions of Grays and Skamokawa Valleys and Puget Island. According to a recent study, farm livelihood averaged for Washington State is graded 173 and Wahkiakum and Pacific Counties are graded 150. The average grade for all the farms in America was 140 in 1954. 1/ Wahkiakum County is placed in the middle fifth of all American counties in terms of income and living standards among farm families.

An earlier economic and social study of Washington farmers by the State College of Washington made in 1950 shows more details of living standards. 2/ Rural electrification is good and Wahkiakum farm homes are above state and national averages in the use of electricity and appliances. Housing standards, use of transportation facilities and net farm income are nearly up to the general farm family average over the state.

As history and statistics presented in these pages have shown, Wahkiakum County agriculture is a record of progress by its industrious people. In less than a century those who have chosen to live on the soil have made their production a basic part of the economy of the lower Columbia River economic area. Numerous and productive dairy, livestock and vegetable farms provide a supplementary activity to forest products industry. Many part-time farms provide a secure and wholesome way of life for lumber and paper industry workers and fishermen. Each farm stands as a living monument to the spirit of enterprise, progress and faith of the varied agriculturists choosing their homes in this county at the mouth of the Columbia.

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1/ U.S. Dept. of Agric. Farm-Operator Family Level of Living Indices For Counties of the United States, 1945, 1950, 1954. Statistical Bulletin No. 204, March 1957, Washington, D.C.

2/ Walter L. Slocum, Carol L. Stone. The Farm People of Washington at Mid-Century. Washington Agric. Exp. Stations, State College of Washington, Bulletin 557, Feb. 1955. Pullman, Wash.